

NASA – AMES RESEARCH CENTER

**OFFICE OF DIVERSITY
AND
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

EXIT INTERVIEW REPORT
(March 2006 – September 2008)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Submitted: January 30, 2009
Barbara Miller – EO Specialist/Manager
Pepsi Phounrath – IT Specialist

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Executive Summary

Ames separated 186 employees during the data collection period from March 2006 to Sept 2008. ODEO solicited all separating employees for participation in the exit interview process. There were 124 employees (72 males, 52 females) who chose to participate in the process rendering a 67% participation rate from those separating the Ames workforce. The individuals leaving Ames were transferring to other federal agencies, sought non government employment, retired, or resigned.

According to EEOC Management Directive -110 (MD-110), MD-715, and other OPM guidance, exit interviews is one of many valuable methods to collect data in the workforce. The exit interview will assist the EO office, HR department, and management with acquiring information from employees that can enhance morale, identify problem areas, provide concepts on promoting an inclusive work force, redirect/direct guidance on processes, policies, practices, and procedures, and identify areas of strength in the work environment. ODEO discontinued the independent exit interview process at the request of NASA-HQ. HQ has implemented a NASA wide electronic exit interview process.

The following questions were selected from the questionnaire because they would solicit employee responses that could identify those areas of attention having more of a direct impact on the Ames workforce:

6. You were given adequate training opportunities?

Overall, 83% of those interviewed indicated they were given adequate training opportunities; however, 13% of the respondents relayed they were not provided adequate training opportunities. It appears that those expressing concern were dissatisfied with the lack of funding for training, denial of training requests, budgetary constraints, and the availability of adequate training. Employee training and development is critical to employee success on the job. Employees should continue to be encouraged to participate in training and development at Ames.

9. Were you motivated to perform to your fullest potential?

Results from the participant responses indicate 83% felt they were motivated to perform to their fullest potential; whereas, 15% relayed they were not motivated to fully perform in the positions held; many expressing the contrary were dismayed with management's leadership ability, lack of tasks to perform, the leadership style of management, lack of interaction with management, and lack of ability to grow or advance in the position. Managers should be encouraged to develop or redevelop a leadership style that is conducive to enhancing morale, productivity, and effective work place communication in the environment.

12. Did you feel you were valued in the work group?

Findings revealed 90% of those interviewed felt valued in their work groups; however, a small 8.1% felt devalued primarily by management at Ames. Some expressed feelings of isolation and alienation by management in the position, but were valued by their co-workers and peers. Ames management should strive to ensure that all employees feel valued no matter what position is held by the employee.

20. You could freely discuss EO issues or concerns with management?

Only 85% of the respondents felt they could express EO issues/concerns with management and 12% indicated they could not talk to management about EO concerns at all. Some individuals felt management was not available, while others expressed discomfort with approaching management to address EO issues. All employees should feel that their managers welcome open discussion about EO issues/concerns. Managers must assist employees with appropriate direction with or resolution of their EO matters.

21. Management practiced favoritism in the work group?

Overall, 77% of the respondents indicated there was equality in the interaction between management and employees relaying no concern about favoritism; however, 20% openly admitted they felt there was favoritism in their work group. Many felt they were not recognized for their contributions, promotions appeared to be given to those in favor with management, and career progression at Ames was not based on merit. Some relayed contractors were given more recognition than civil servants, management favored supervisors and other managers, Asians promoted their own kind, or females had a tendency to favor females in the work center. Ames management should ensure the alleviation of the appearance of favoritism in its work centers.

23. Discrimination was prevalent in the work group?

Only 85% of the respondents indicated there was no discrimination prevalent and 10% adamantly stated it certainly existed in their work center. It appears that there are inappropriate statements made, employees have noticed the lack of minority representation and women in the SES ranks, and the difference in the treatment of people of color at Ames. Employees should never feel they work within a discriminatory environment and all managers should ensure due diligence in their efforts to eliminate an appearance of discrimination and the employees' perception of such at Ames.

24. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions that would make Ames Research Center a better work environment?

Ninety-four percent (94%) of the respondents enjoy their jobs at Ames and 90% indicated the work environment makes it easy to perform their jobs. Employees considered the level of morale in their work centers as low, moderate, or high, and a moderate level garnered 59% of the participant responses. High morale received a 26% response rate with low morale trailing behind with 13% of the responses. Most of the respondents felt they received adequate career counseling with a 91% response rate. Employees did not attribute their success to mentoring indicating only 36% of the respondents received mentoring on or off the Center; whereas, 62% had no mentors while employed at Ames.

Most employees leaving Ames felt they were recognized for their contributions at Ames and responded with an 87% rate versus 10% answering they did not feel they were recognized for a job well done. Respondents gave affirmative responses with 86% indicating co-workers did their fair share of work and 85% relaying managers encouraged team work within the work centers. Those leaving Ames responded the relationship between contractor and civil servant personnel was favorable reflecting a 94% response rate with only 4% stating the contrary.

Employees recommended that Ames should give more attention to effectively training managers, students, and employees. Support for admin and institutional organizations appear to be declining and lack of funding certainly has impacted center operations across the orgs. Morale could be enhanced with more administrative support and employee recognition for their contributions; management should ensure there's equitable treatment of all employees. Respondents suggested more hiring within should occur for senior level and SES positions and strive to engage employees when there's a need to create more effective processes or procedures. Some would like to see more mentoring available to the employees. Others felt there are too many levels of management, and there should be more open communication at Ames. A few felt there is a need for a more diverse workforce, and serious attention should be given to employee workload and required staffing. One employee suggested that the new employee orientation should be computerized and created as an electronic process, and another encourages more fairness in the approval for the buyout process.

25. Other comments:

Most of the respondents felt there was open communication between them and their supervisor reflecting 89% answering affirmative and only 9% rendering negative responses. However, the responses lowered slightly when responding to the supervisor's ability to keep the atmosphere positive in the work group with 86% providing positive answers and 11% indicated the contrary. Respondents

addressed the timeliness and accuracy of performance feedback with a slight discrepancy in the answers. Positive answers regarding timeliness of feedback received an 86% response rate; whereas, accuracy of the feedback reflected 90% of the responses. Staff meetings are occurring at Ames. 92% of the respondents indicated their supervisors held staff meetings; however, 79% indicated their manager discussed EO/discrimination policies with the staff, and only 81% of the respondents felt equal opportunity was provided to all employees by management.

Respondents made other comments for consideration by the ODEO office and Center management. Ames is a great place to work! However, due to budgetary constraints and changes in the Agency mission it appears that morale has decreased over the past several years. One respondent's question was, "Will there ever be a woman Center director?" Others said: "There are too many managers placed in managerial positions without the necessary management skills and the ability to manage people; some positions do not provide opportunity for career progression; and there are problems with the SES performance system." Some respondents preferred to not continue in the uncertainty of RIF and lay-offs.

They went on to relay that some managers at Ames are great; certain work centers are extremely stressful to work in; and, there's isolation and no team effort. In some instances respondents indicated, management impedes employee performance; the Union is diluting the effectiveness of management; and, HR lacks adequate staffing and support. One respondent stated, "The Center secretaries are white and selections of details in the position appear to be the same." Others thought, Ames seems to be a diverse workforce. One relayed that ODEO is over zealous; however, ensure that EO info is distributed to the IG staff on Center. A respondent indicated he received excellent mentoring during his employment with Ames. Some thought there wasn't sharing of best practices or NASA projects with other Centers. A few believed that NASA has no unity within the Agency; research has diminished, and the budgetary woes at the Center are debilitating employee skills.

Recommendations:

1. Promote an inclusive work environment in all areas of the workforce through effective leadership, management, and communication.
2. Encourage managers to have staff meetings
3. Promote an "open door" policy with management or create a scheduled time for management's "open door" invitation to meet with their employees
4. Hold managers accountable for resolving employee concerns and issues
5. Continue the DEOB and create subcommittees for continued work on various EO and diversity tasks around Center

6. Provide incentives and recognition to those managers promoting diversity and equal opportunity within the workforce
7. Invite employees internal and external to the designated POC Directorate to work on various Center activities and events.
8. Establish a once per quarter “open” meeting for the Executive Council to permit employees to attend
9. Encourage managers to recognize employee contribution to Center/Directorate/Division level missions in staff meetings or “all hands”
10. Promote the training and development of all employees
11. Establish a monthly lunch time meeting with the Center Director and/or Deputy Center Director
12. Conduct monthly lunch-n-learns on the “how to’s” for promotions, training, cultivating professional relationships, conflict management, etc.
13. Conduct monthly Directorate “open houses” and invite all employees
14. Encourage and reward across-Center partnering in projects and other activities
15. Support diversity and EO training
16. Be proactive in outreach to Historical Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU), Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCU), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)
17. Focus on outreach & hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities (IWTD)
18. Promote the hiring of students (SCEP and STEP) year round
19. Create a 30-day sponsorship program for all new employees
20. Encourage telework at Ames
21. Compile and maintain a list of all Center student programs and opportunities
22. Create a Center conflict management panel/team (3-4 persons) to be used voluntarily by employees and management

Exit Interview Questionnaire Responses

DATA COMPILATION DATE: 3/1/06 - 9/30/08

SEX: Male 72 Female 52 *Total Interviewed: 124 (67%)

*Total Personnel Loss: 186

JOB ENVIRONMENT	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Did you like your job?	116	6
2. Your work atmosphere made it easy to do your job.	111	17
3. Did you experience unreasonable stress on the job?	35	82
4. Morale in your work group was:	Low 16 Moderate 73 High 32	
5. You received adequate career counseling.	113	27
6. You were given adequate training opportunities.	103	16
7. Did you have a mentor on or off the Center?	45	77
MOTIVATION/RECOGNITION		
8. Were you recognized for doing a good job?	108	13
9. Were you motivated to perform to your fullest potential?	103	18
PEER RELATIONSHIPS		
10. Do you think your co-workers did their fair share of work?	107	12
11. Did your managers encourage teamwork?	105	16
12. Did you feel you were valued in the work group?	111	10
13. Relationship between contractors and civil servants was favorable.	116	5
MANAGEMENT		
14. Open communication between you and supervisor.	110	11

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
15. Supervisor kept atmosphere in work group positive.	107	14
16. Supervisor provided timely performance feedback.	107	13
17. Recent performance feedback was accurate.	111	10
18. Supervisor held staff meetings.	114	6
19. Management discussed all discrimination policies with staff.	98	22
20. You could freely discuss EO issues or concerns with management.	106	15
21. Management practiced favoritism in the work group.	25	96
22. Management provided equal opportunity to all employees.	101	17
23. Discrimination was prevalent in the work group.	13	106
24. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions that would make Ames Research Center a better work environment?	39	62

*Note: There were separating employees who chose to not participate in the voluntary exit interview process conducted by ODEO. A few refused to complete the exit interview form, but did provide verbal comments about their employment experience at Ames. There were several respondents that failed to answer all questions on the exit interview form.

Negative Responses & Org Location

Question # 2

Your work atmosphere made it easy to do your job?

Org Code Responses (17 **No**) A-1, D-1, E-2, H-1, J-3, P-2, R-1, S-3, T-2, Y-1

Question # 3

Did you experience unreasonable stress on the job?

Org Code Responses (35 **Yes**): A-3, C-5, D-4, E-3, H-4, J-5, P-1, R-1, S-4, T-2, Y-1

Question # 4

Morale in your work group was:

Org Code Responses (16 **Low**): A-1, D-1, E-2, H-1, J-5, P-2, S-2, T-2

Question # 8

Were you recognized for doing a good job?

Org Code Responses (13 **No**): A-1, C-2, D-2, E-1, J-3, R-1, S-2, T-1

Question # 9

Were you motivated to perform to your fullest potential?

Org Code Responses (18 **No**): A- 2, C - 3, D - 2, E - 2, J - 3, P - 2, S - 1, T - 2, Y-1

Question # 14

Open communication between you and supervisor.

Org Code Responses (11 **No**): A-1, C - 1, D - 3, E- 1, T - 1, J - 3, P - 1

Question # 18

Supervisor held staff meetings.

Org Code Responses (6 **No**): T - 1, D - 2, W - 1, R-1, S-1

Question # 19

Management discussed all discrimination policies with staff.

Org Code Responses (22 **No**): A -2, C - 2, D - 2, E-3, J-5 , P-1, R-1, S-3, T - 2, W-1

Question # 20

You could freely discuss EO issues or concerns with management.

Org Code Responses (15 **No**): A-1, D - 2, E - 2, J - 5, P – 2, S-1, T-1, W1

Question # 21

Management practiced favoritism in the work group.

Org Code Responses (25 **Yes**): A-1, C - 4, E – 3, D – 2, J – 5, P – 2, S – 4, R-1, Q-1

Question # 22

Management provided equal opportunity to all employees.

Org Code Responses (17 **No**): C - 2, D - 2, E - 3, J - 2, P - 2, R-1, S – 3, T - 2

Question # 23

Discrimination was prevalent in the work group.

Org Code Responses (13 **Yes**): A -2, D - 2, J - 3, P – 1, R -1, S - 3, T – 1

Appendix C

NASA – Ames Research Center Exit Interview Questionnaire

This voluntary survey is designed to give management feedback about how you viewed your job and work environment while employed here at Ames. Identifying demographic information will not be asked of you. You may volunteer identifying information or request anonymity. However, we will ask you to identify the organization in which you were employed to assist us with identifying trends within the work place. Your responses will not be kept confidential. Thank you for responding to this questionnaire.

DATE: _____

SEX: _____ Male _____ Female

ORGANIZATION: Code _____

GRADE: _____

REASON FOR SEPARATING: _____

JOB ENVIRONMENT

1. Did you like your job? _____ Yes _____ No
 2. Your work atmosphere made it easy to do your job. _____ Yes _____ No
 3. Did you experience unreasonable stress on the job? _____ Yes _____ No
 4. Morale in your work group was: Low _____ Moderate _____ High _____
 5. You received adequate career counseling. _____ Yes _____ No
 6. You were given adequate training opportunities. _____ Yes _____ No
- If No to Q1-2, or 5-6, please explain. _____
- _____
- _____

7. Did you have a mentor on or off the Center? _____ Yes _____ No

MOTIVATION/RECOGNITION

8. Were you recognized for doing a good job? _____ Yes _____ No
 9. Were you motivated to perform to your fullest potential? _____ Yes _____ No
- If No to Q8-9, please explain. _____
- _____
- _____

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

10. Do you think your co-workers did their fair share of work? _____ Yes _____ No
 11. Did your work group manager(s) encourage teamwork? _____ Yes _____ No
 12. Did you feel you were valued in the work group? _____ Yes _____ No
- If No to Q10-12, please explain. _____
- _____
- _____

13. Relationship between contractors and civil servants was favorable. _____ Yes _____ No

MANAGEMENT

14. Open communication between you and supervisor. ____ Yes ____ No
15. Supervisor kept atmosphere in work group positive. ____ Yes ____ No
16. Supervisor provided timely performance feedback. ____ Yes ____ No
17. Recent performance feedback was accurate. ____ Yes ____ No
18. Supervisor held staff meetings. ____ Yes ____ No
19. Management discussed all discrimination policies with staff. ____ Yes ____ No
20. You could freely discuss EO issues or concerns with management. ____ Yes ____ No

If No to Q14-20, please explain. _____

21. Management practiced favoritism in the work group. ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, in what ways did management favor others. _____

22. Management provided equal opportunity to all employees. ____ Yes ____ No

23. Discrimination was prevalent in the work group. ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how was discrimination prevalent? _____

24. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions that would make Ames Research Center a better work environment for employees? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please identify your recommendation or suggestion: _____

25. Other comments/additional explanations from Q1-24: _____